

RICE UNIVERSITY

**RIDING THE URBAN CARPET**

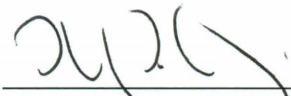
building acts and performative strategies

by

Nick Charles Dagna, Jr.

A Thesis Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Architecture.

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE



John J. Casbarian, Professor, Advisor  
School of Architecture

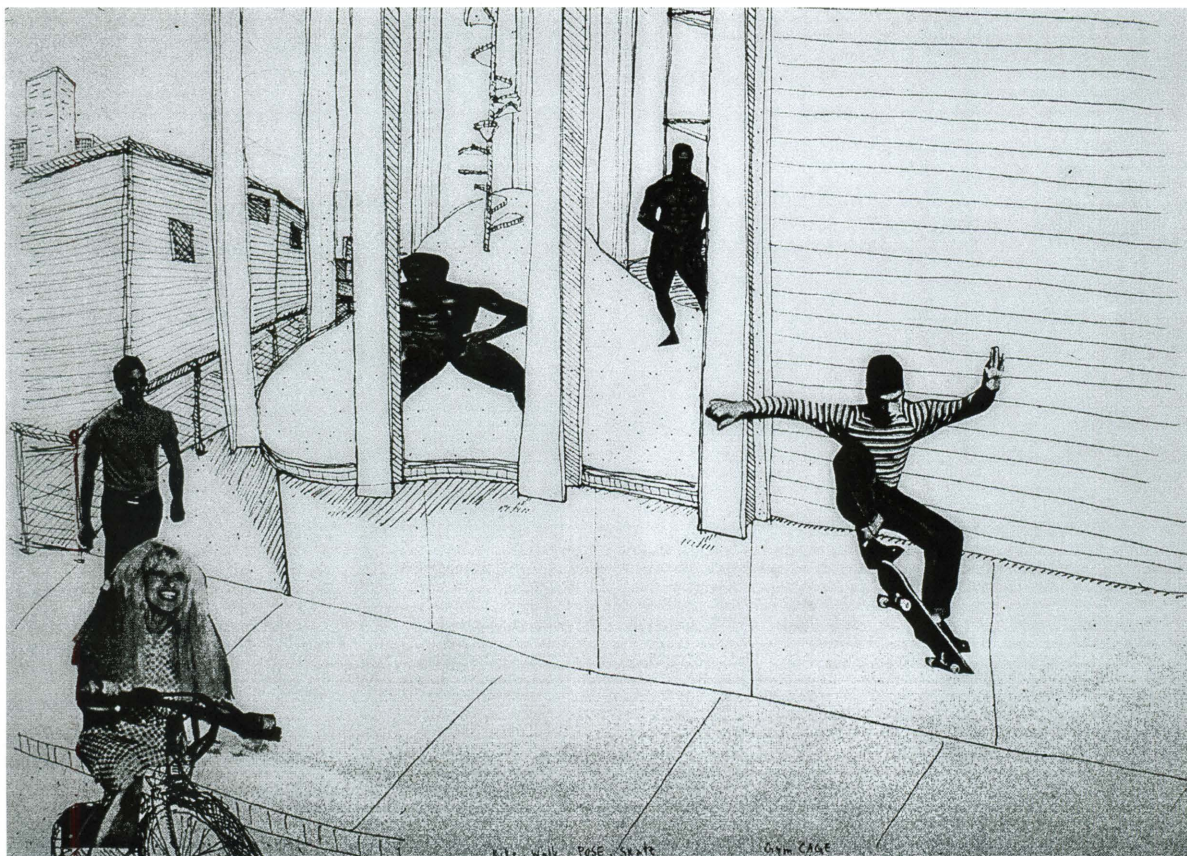


Fares el-Dahdah, Assitant Professor  
School of Architecture



David Brown, Assitant Professor  
School of Architecture

Houston, Texas  
January 18, 1997

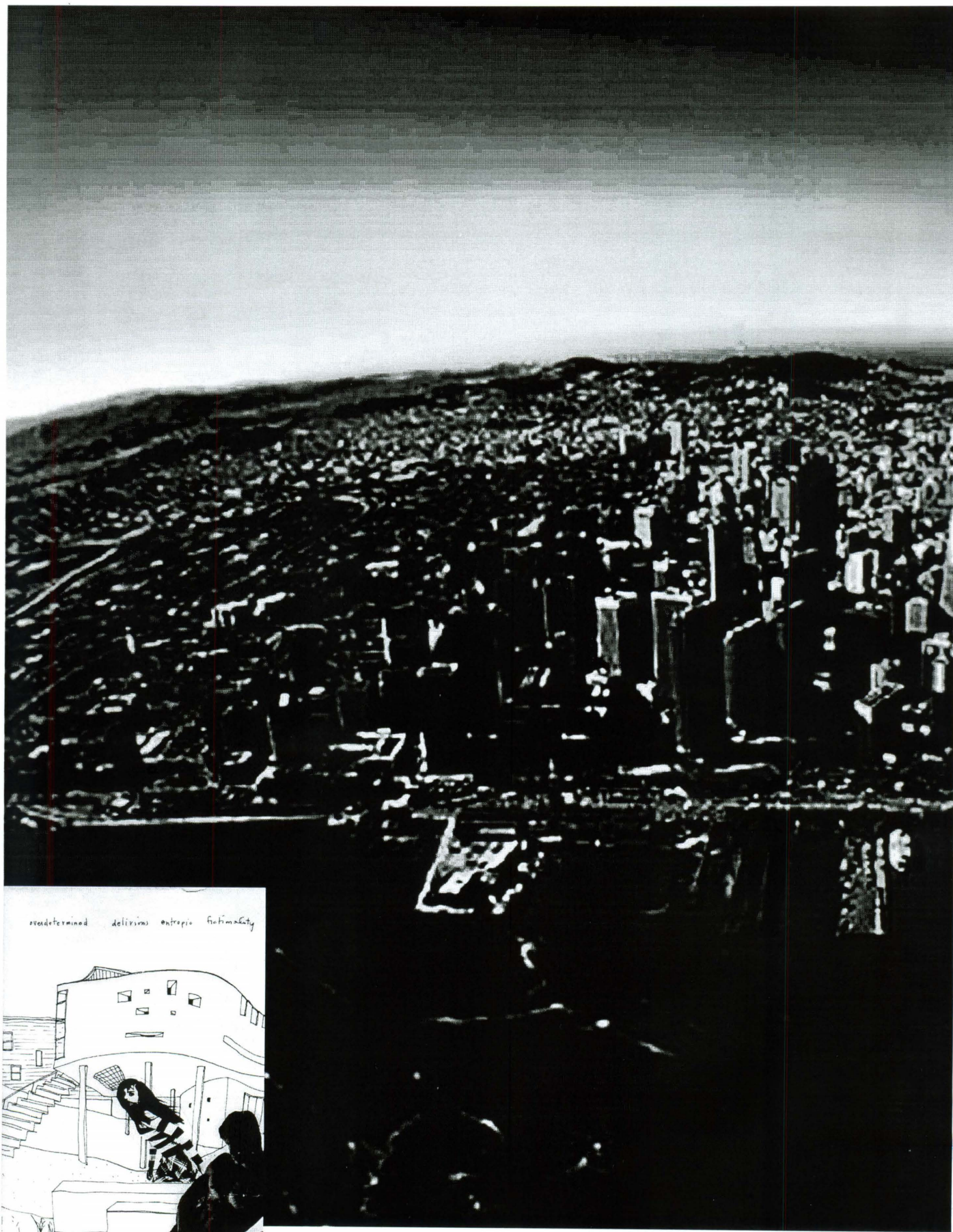


**The city as an environment has room for a  
multiplicity of roles, among which the  
architect's may be not be that of unifier.**

— Lawrence Alloway, 1959

















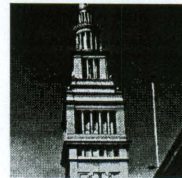


*aerial view of San Francisco looking east*

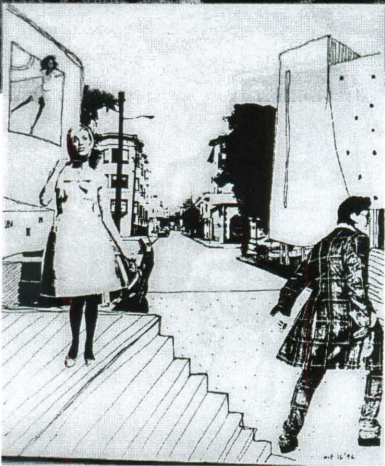
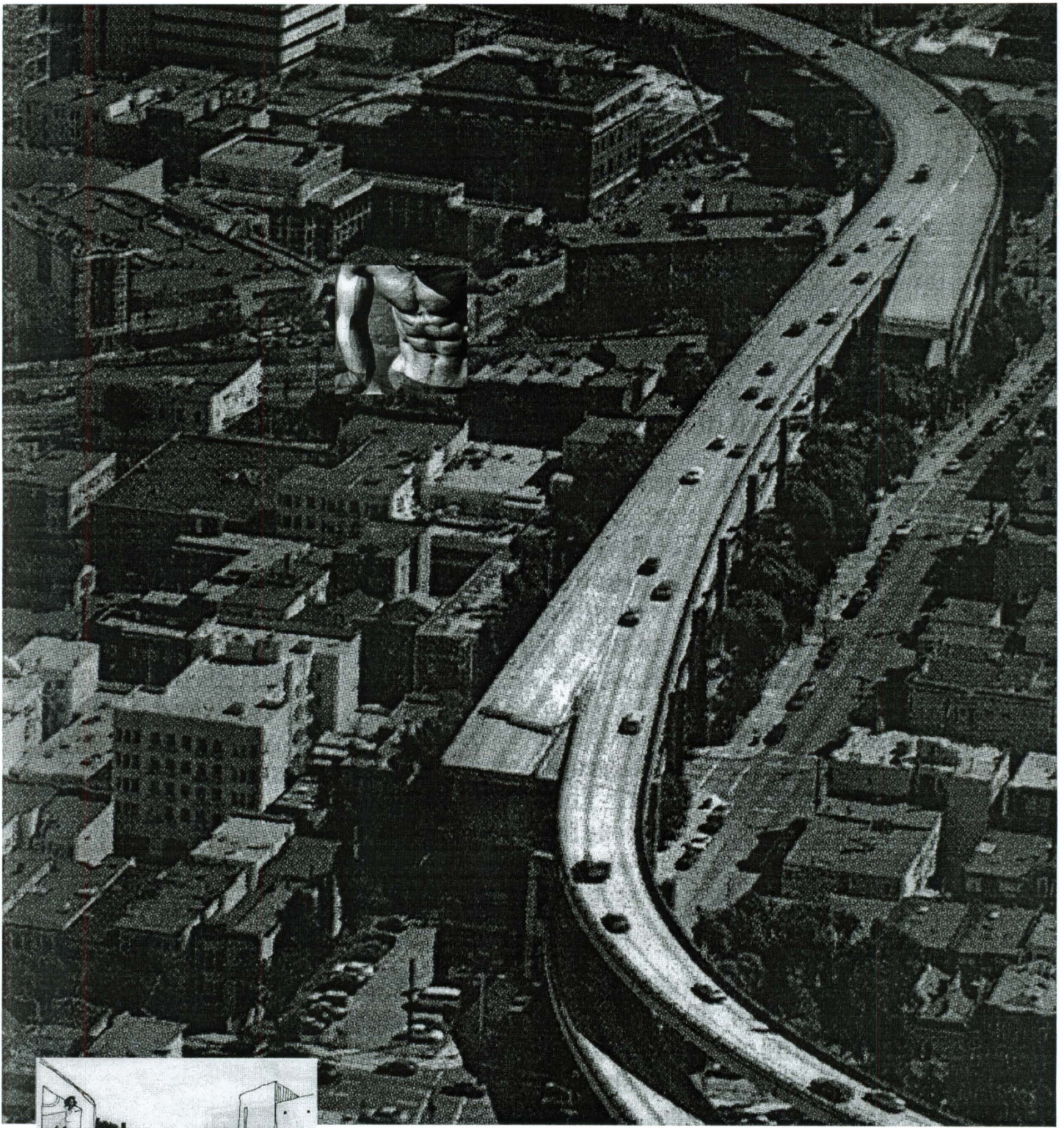
*(from Visionary San Francisco, p. 14, photo: Backwell)*

*previous page, aerial view of San Francisco looking west*

*(download from the internet)*











*aerial view of the central freeway before  
demolition, 1996*

*(photo: San Francisco Chronicle)*





physical

over-determined

circles

spectacle

sexed

FAST  
Call

**Experiencing the City**  
The combination of density, complexity and possibility for encounter in the city is exploding with changing. Unique in its rapid growth, coming from the intersection of public and private, and the development of a new urban environment, producing urban spaces over time.

**Exchanging Structures—engineering strategies**  
The bulk environment articulates in the areas of critical relations by engaging in the construction of spaces, held in place by meaning and cultural arrangement. As a method, use, evidence, and evidence, the engineering is based on the idea that the order of the city is a function of probability, structured within the city, or urban forms, are generated and combined in a manner designed to augment the social life of the urban form.

**Strong Forms**  
The city of San Francisco serves as the site for the development of urban spaces, form, or space, proximity and purpose. The project is located in the linear space remaining after the demolition of a freeway, the corridor through the urban fabric. This unprecedented spatial condition in the city provides a place for the organization of city building and the construction of urban communities.

accident



RY  
EL  
BOTH  
ERN  
ON

"The city as an environment has room for a multiplicity of roles, among which the architect's may not be that of unifier."  
—Laurie R. King 1988

the

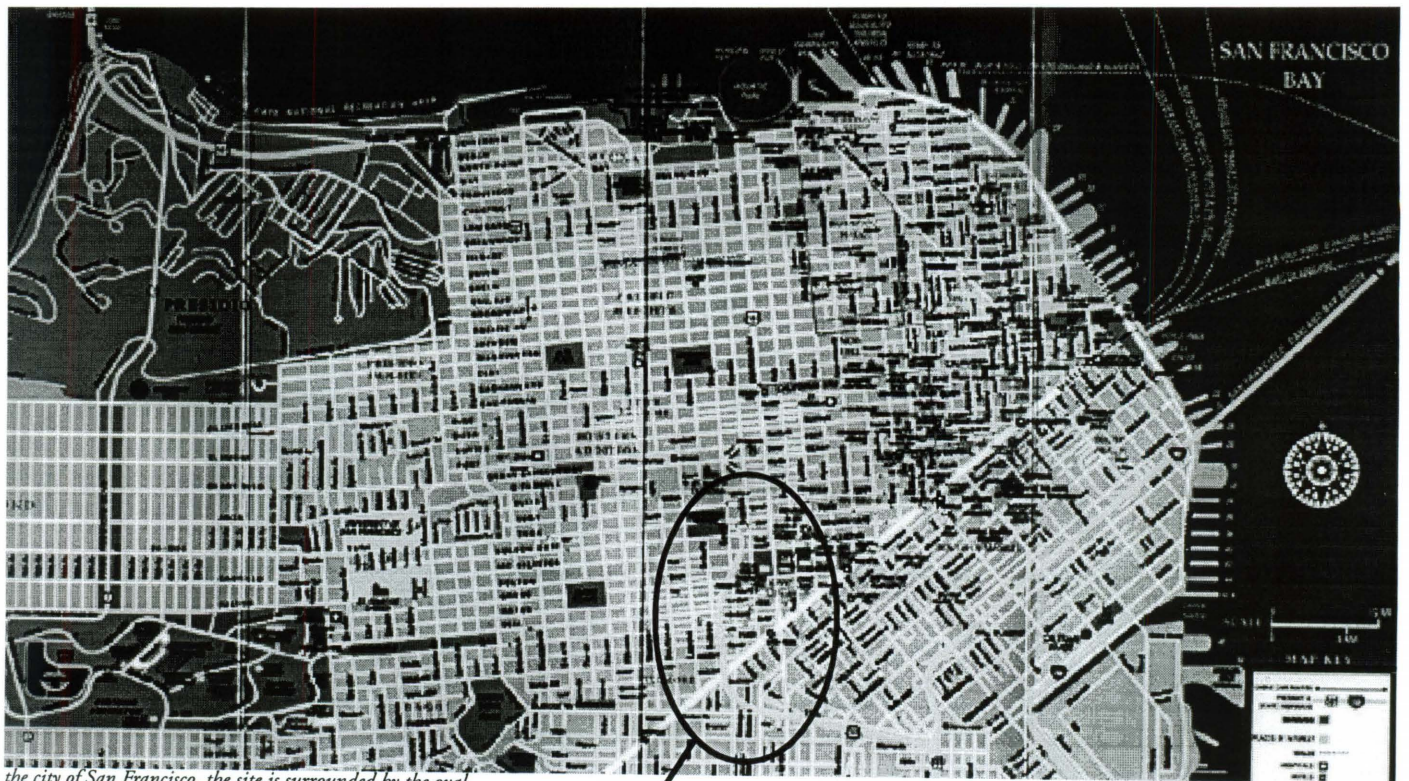
fiction



## Experiencing the City



The combination of density, simultaneity and the possibility for encounter in the city is exploding with meaning. Unique urban experiences emerge from the interaction of people within the dense and simultaneous physical and narrative environment, developing urban spaces over time.



*the city of San Francisco, the site is surrounded by the oval*



*the bay area*



## Entangling Structures

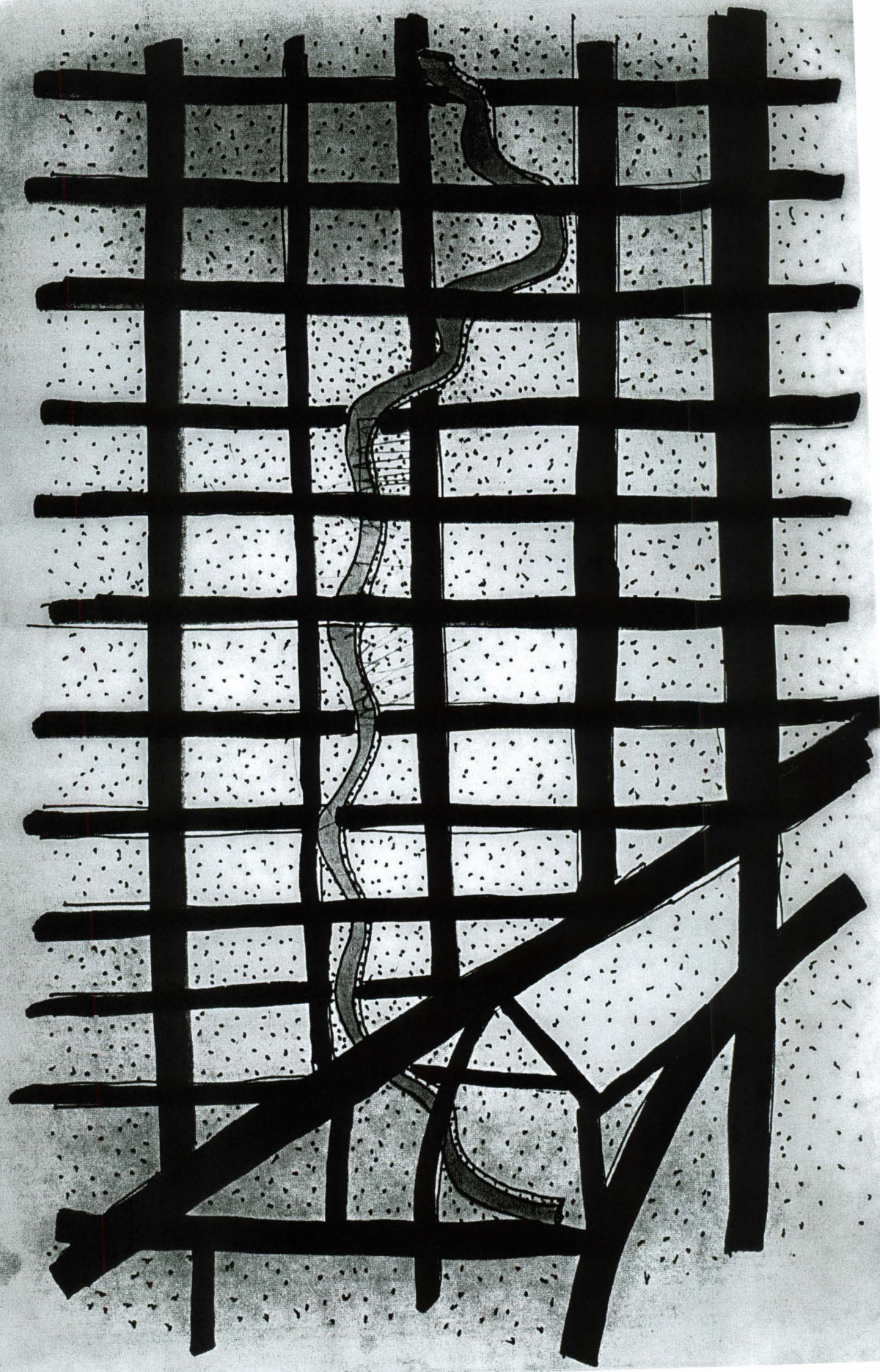


Engendering strategies.

The built environment participates in the arena of social relations by engaging in the construction of spaces, held in place by meaning and cultural arrangement. As a method, use, incident and narrative are implemented as devices to charge these spaces with presence. Derived from the idea that the order of the city is a function of proximity, structures within the city, or urban forms, are generated and combined in a manner designed to augment the social life of the urban dweller.

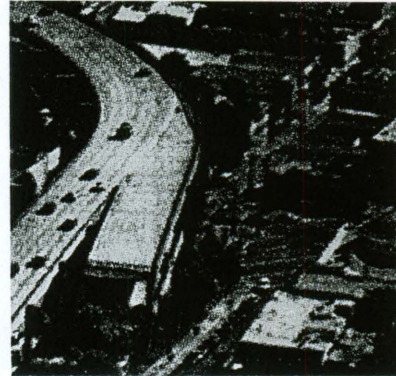


Dec 16, 1994  
URBAN CARPET / RUNNING TRACK  
↑  
STREET GRID





## Building Cities



The city of San Francisco, California serves as the site for the development of urban strategies based on spatial proximity and narrative. The project is located in and adjacent to the linear space remaining after the demolition of a freeway which coursed through the urban fabric. This unprecedented spatial condition provides a place for the engagement of city-building and the continued construction of urban communities.







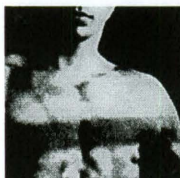
## Projects

The strategy pursued in this series of propositions is one based on an idea that localized activities govern the act of city building.



## Running Track

The entire length of the site is occupied by the track. Its surface is similar to a typical stadium track and is orange in color.



## Rooms

Civic Center—in this area a tourist observation tower and a grouping of motel rooms is proposed.



## Gym

Hayes Valley—the gymnasium is the central project of all of the propositions. It is a generator of community. A place where body erotics rule, where image is manifest.

## Forest

A wooded neighborhood block, thick with hidden excitement and mystery.



## SFLGBTCC

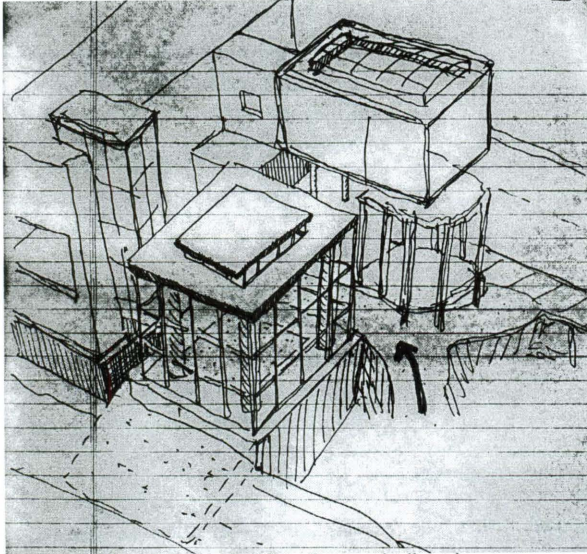
*(The San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center)*

A city-sponsored competition is underway to build a center at the corner of Market St. and Octavia. A public place for organized meetings.

## Parking

A massive parking structure is placed at the termination of the elevated central freeway. The running track slides into the opposite end of the structure, creating a pedestrian path from the highway.



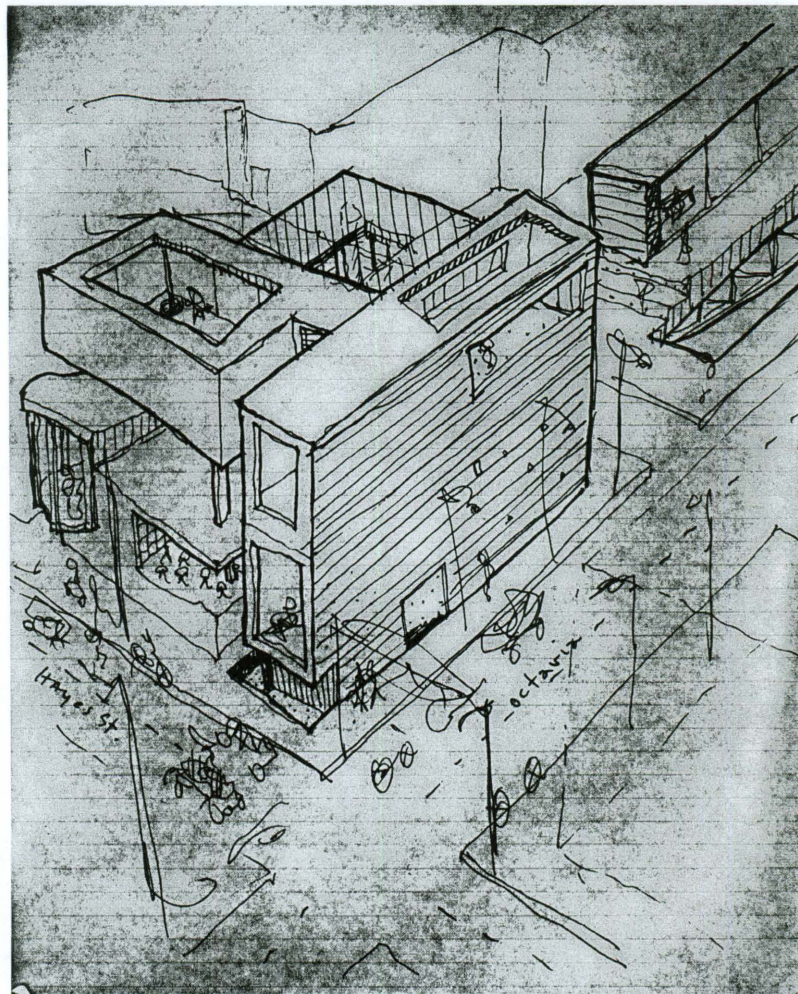


*southeast corner of the gym buildings from track/alley side*



## Proposition 1: The GYM

The gym situates itself in Hayes Valley along Hayes Street at the intersection of Octavia. At this intersection the running track dips below the street grade. The buildings of the gym act to transition between the track and the streets.



*gym buildings from Hayes St. and Octavia*

Mark tied his chow to a tree while he ran into the store.



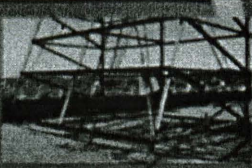
ELEVATION  
hayes

Child sets are set in the Guardian on Thursday  
as he decides to go into Misconceptions to see  
what they have to offer. He has heard that the  
stream rooms can get out of hand.

octavia



COMMUNITY  
generator



OUT doors

in

SLOT entry

billboard  
IMAGE

hayes street

PLAN 1"=20'

JUICE  
bar

MIRROR  
pumped

petio

pose  
down

loop

pool

REAL

linden alley

BRIDGE

traced  
BODY  
hard

I walked along the sidewalk,  
next to the talent agency.  
Looking down onto the running  
track below I saw two of my  
friends out for a run after work.  
I had to hurry to make it to the  
Castro theater for the 8:30  
showing of 'Beautiful Thing'.

FREE  
weights

mirrored  
space

SHOWS

fall street

SECTION 1"=20' A

hayes  
passage

steam

pool

linden

track







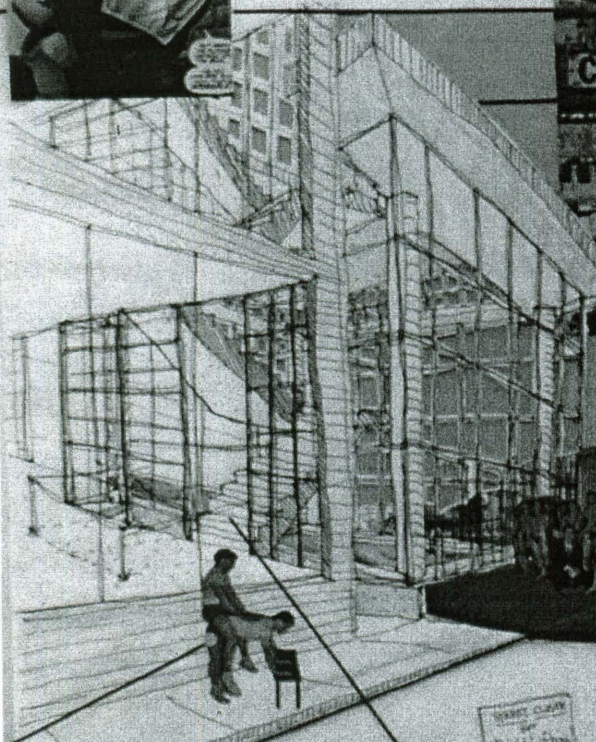
# COMMER

**CIA**

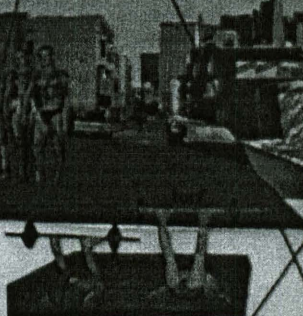
## AREA PLAN



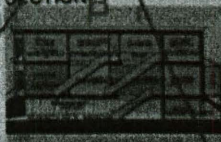
poolside  
**POSE**



## PERSPECTIVE D

**REWARD**

SECTION



ELEVATION

door

reactives

**aerobics**

Julie spends at least three hours every day at the gym, the claim that he can't just come back five days later. He therefore ends up in the gymnasium more critically examining each exercise and every bit of his pumped body. And then to have a stomach ache at the very end and watch him come in front of the nation.



# BIG

## STAIR MASTER

SECTION C 11.20

Time is precious. This was the first time he had approached Eric to discuss what his identity had said he was afraid. Eric founds a set of lyrics at the end of a first long set. Two hours later, Tom closes the door at the Circle Kette Motel—8:20 a.m. and quiet.

# TALENT

## STUDIO

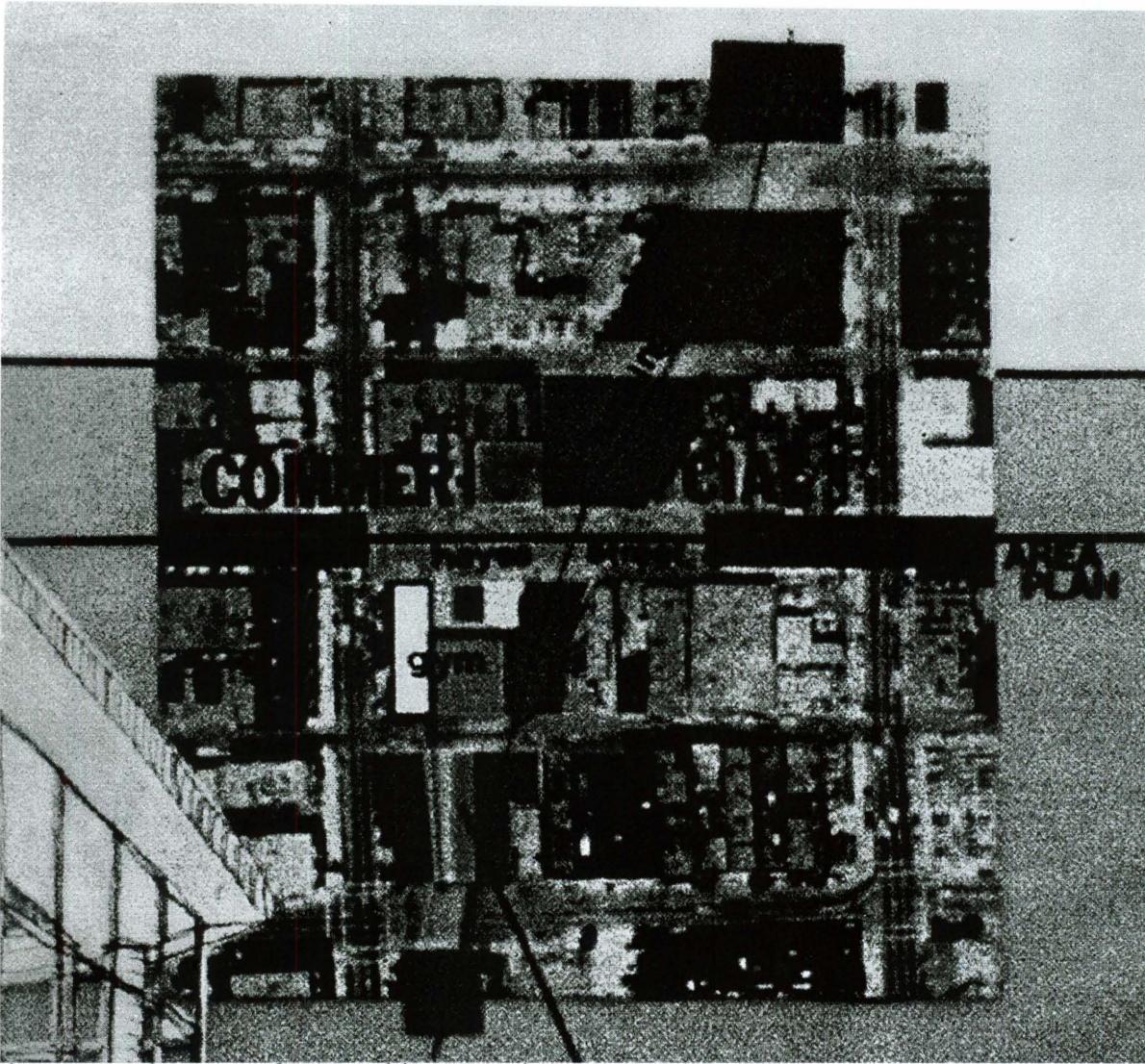


## Another LOOP



# GYM

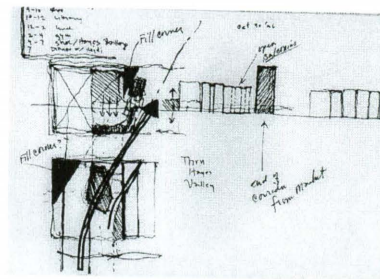




*the gym project at the intersection of Hayes St. and the running track*

Jack was rushing to get to the cafe for his opera date with jason. They had agreed to meet at 6:30 so they would have time for a cocktail and then walk to the opera house.





At Hayes Street the track bends.  
The building situates itself between  
the track and the grid of the  
city blocks.

"The Safeway?"

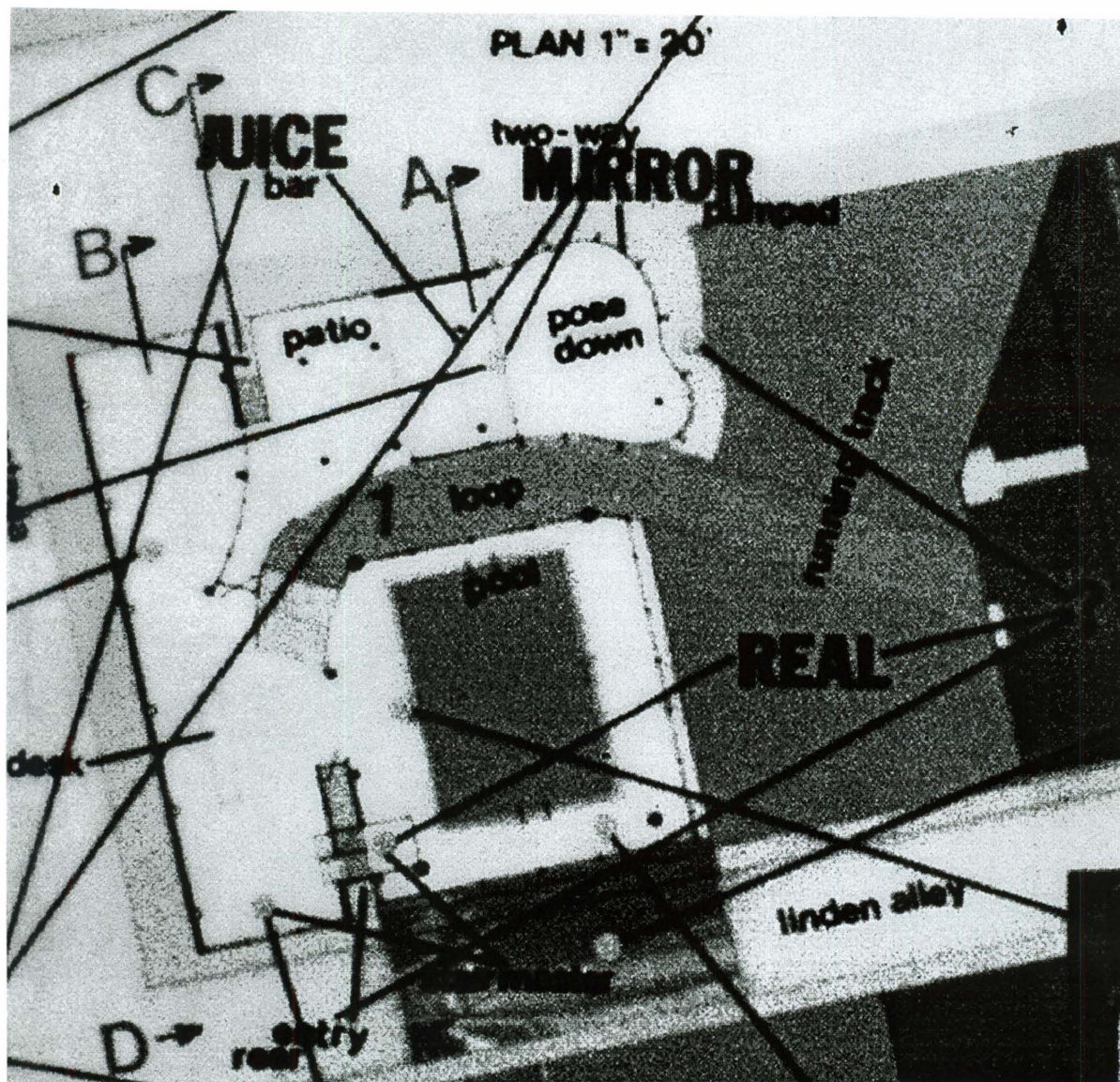
"Not *that* one, actually. The one  
on Upper Market. From *my*  
standpoint, it's a lot cruisier." He  
slapped his own cheek.

"Stop that. You're embarrassing  
the girl."

from *Tales of the City*



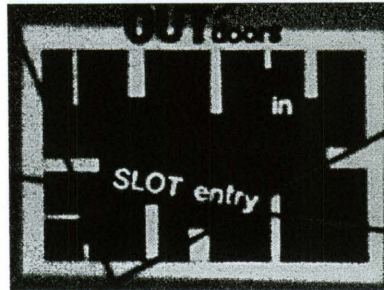




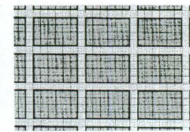
*gym plan, "Banality may be the welcome minus after a hot explosion of meaning. from Jack The Modernist"*

The city is performative. An identity is created through our own performances. Buildings participate in these structured events, influencing our actions in their physical order and responding to our changing habits in their programmatic mutability.

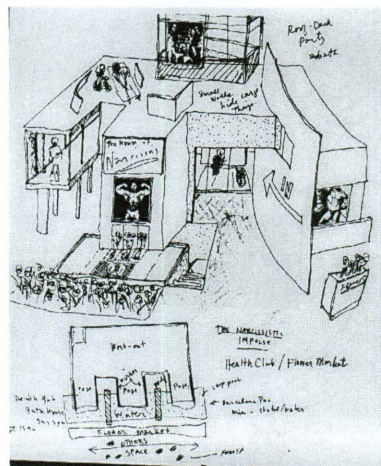




Circulation and property ownership patterns in the city are governed by the grid of streets.



The division of the blocks into narrow lots has created spaces in between the buildings. Transition spaces between inside and outside.



mannered body

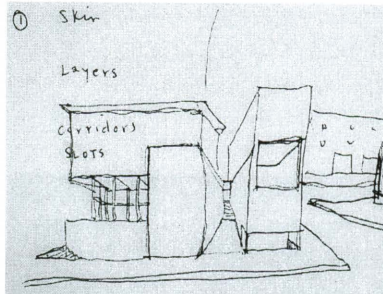
dandy

aesthetically  
rendered self

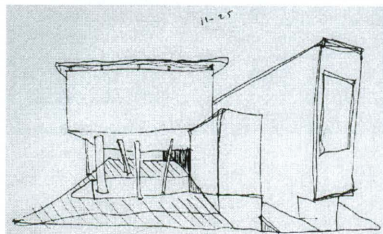
*early sketch of a slotted volume*

To be natural...is such a difficult pose to keep up. —Oscar Wilde





to POSE: to place in a specified situation or condition, placing oneself in position especially for artistic purposes, an attitude or posture of the body, an air, affectation, mannerism



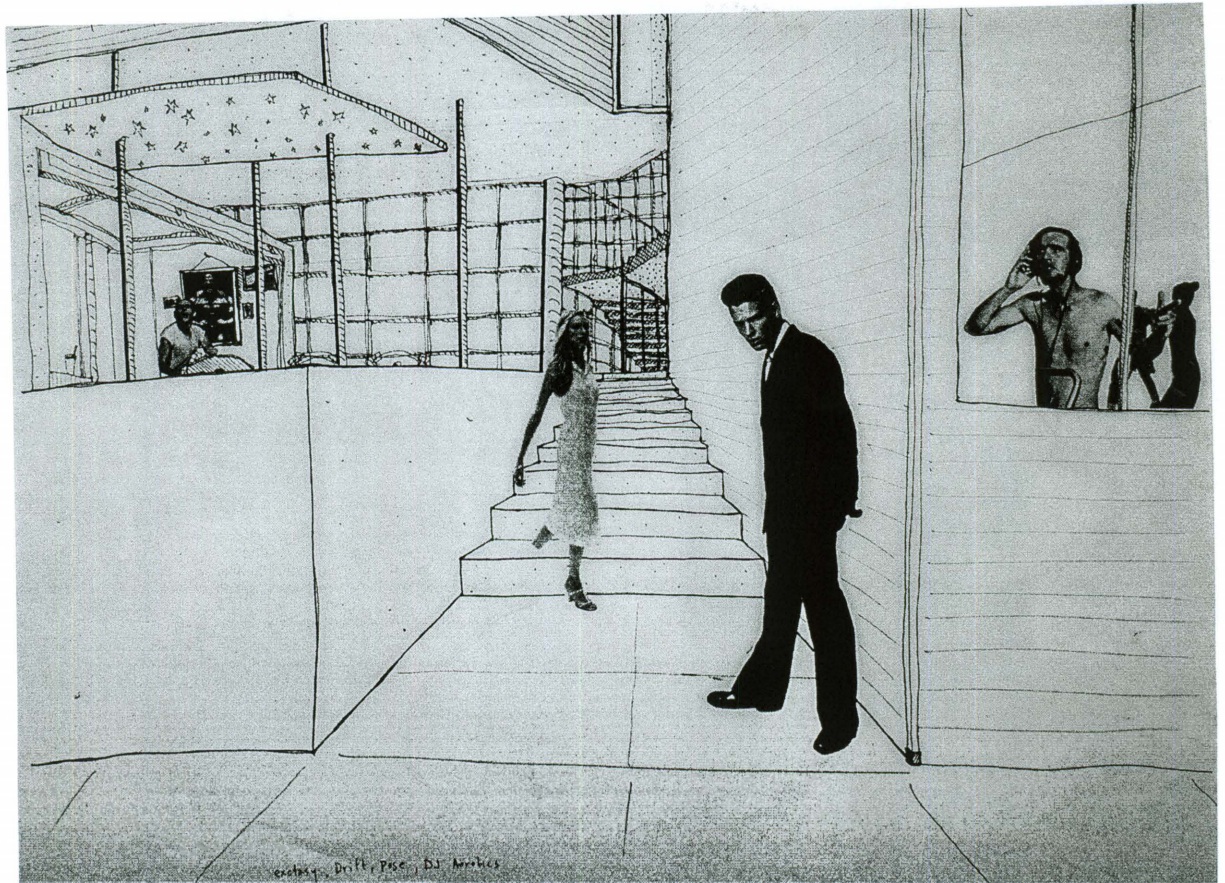
*studies for the slot entrance*

POSING: the artifice or fictionality of "position" understood simultaneously as a social and spatial location of embodiment



*a typical slot between buildings*



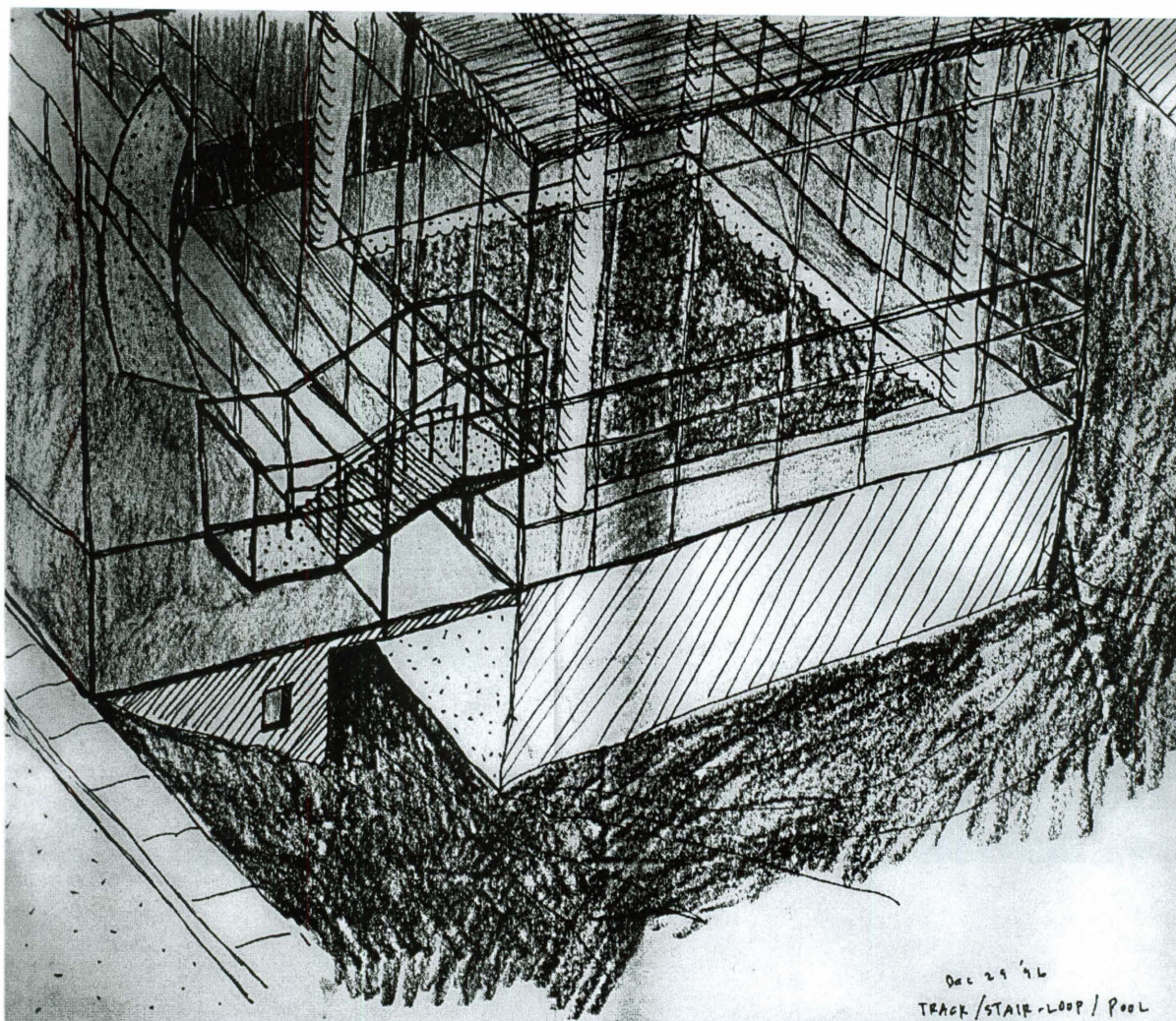


*The identity of people is expressed through their performance within the built environment of the city.*



the theater how fabulous Christopher looked in his new D&G outfit.

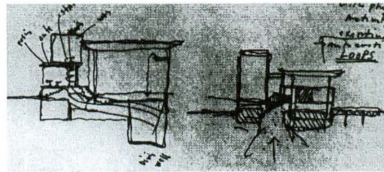




*study for "stair master" between the pool and the aerobics room, track beneath*

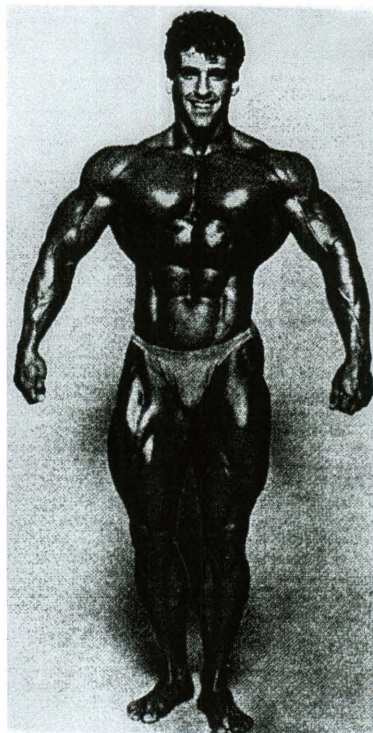
Mike was walking home from the gym when he ran into Jeff. They agreed to meet tomorrow night at eight o'clock for a light dinner at the Civic Center Cafe.





*sketch of track between the gym buidlings*

The body is trained or artificially pressed into shape determined by the society as reflecting its cultural ideals



*Bob Paris shaping the desirable body*

## PUMPED

self-sustaining experience, the gym is a realm of experience; "no pain, no gain" pain of exertion becoming a masochistic pleasure; telos=completion; teleios=perfect, having reached its end; self-actualization; muscle questers

metamorphosis

Narcissus

Total housing units: 305,584; owner occupied: 105,514; renter occupied: 200,070; 2.29 persons per household; median gross rent: \$653.00; Work 35 + hours per week: 343,830. source: U.S. Census, 1990.



TWENTY-THIRD IDYLL

*A lovesick man longed for a cruel youth,  
beautiful in form but not in his manner,  
for he hated his lover, and felt for him  
no tenderness. He knew nothing of Eros—  
what god he is, or what kind of bow  
he carries, or what bitter arrows  
he lodges in the heart. He was unyielding  
whenever they met and spoke. There was  
no solace for love's fires: no quivering  
of the lips, or eye-glances, or blushing cheek—  
not a word, not a kiss, to ease the passion.  
Like a wild animal of the forest  
watching the hunter, he looked at the man,  
with hostile lip, and eyes that glared at him  
as sternly as fate. His bitter mood  
changed his whole face, which lost its color  
because of his angry pride. Yet even so  
he was handsome, and his haughtiness  
moved the lover all the more, till at last  
he could no longer bear so fierce a flame  
of the Kythereian, but came and wept*

*by the cruel dwelling, and kissed the doorpost,  
and lifted up his voice: "Cruel boy,  
and heartless, a fierce lioness' nursling—  
boy of stone, unworthy of love, I have come  
with this last gift for you, my hanging-rope.  
I will not anger you anymore, my boy,  
with the sight of me, but will take the road  
to which you have condemned me, where, men say,  
is the common cure for lovers—oblivion.  
But if with my lips I drain it, every drop,  
even then I shall not quench my desire.  
But now at last I bid farewell to your door.  
I know what is to be. The rose is lovely,  
but time withers it. And the violet  
is beautiful in spring but grows old quickly.  
The lily is white. It fades as it flowers.  
And snow is white, until it melts on the ground.  
The brightness of youth is beautiful, but lives  
only a little while. The day will come  
when you'll love, and your heart will burn, and you'll  
weep*



salt tears. But my child, do me one last favor.  
When you come out and find me, a poor wretch,  
hanging in your doorway, don't pass me by,  
but stay and weep awhile in libation,  
and take me down from the rope, and cover me  
with some clothing from your body. And give me  
a last kiss, granting the grace of your lips  
to the dead. Don't be afraid of me.  
I can't harm you, reconciled with a kiss.

Dig me a grave to hide my love in  
and before you go, cry over me three times  
'Rest, my friend.' And also, if you will,  
'My good friend is dead.' And write this epitaph  
that I will scratch on your wall: "This man  
was killed by Love. Traveler, do not pass by,  
but stop and say, He had a cruel friend."

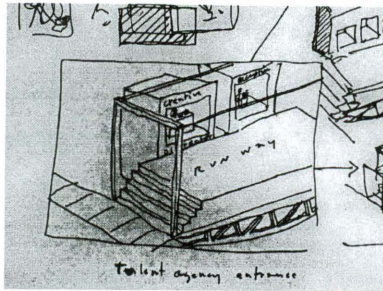
When he had said this he took a stone  
and set it in the middle of the doorway—

a terrible stone. And tied up the slender rope  
and fastened the loop around his neck and kicked  
the stone from under his foot and hung there dead.

But when the other opened the door  
and saw the body hanging from his doorway,  
his heart was unmoved, and he did not weep  
for this strange death or defile his boy's clothes  
on the corpse, but went off to the contests  
at the gymnasium, light-heartedly  
seeking his favorite bathing-place.  
And there he met the god he had scorned,  
on a stone pedestal above the water.  
And the statue leaped on him, and killed  
that cruel boy. The water reddened  
with blood and the boy's voice floated above it:  
"Rejoice, lovers, for the hater is dead.  
And love, haters, for the god knows how to judge."

from The Idylls of Theokritos.

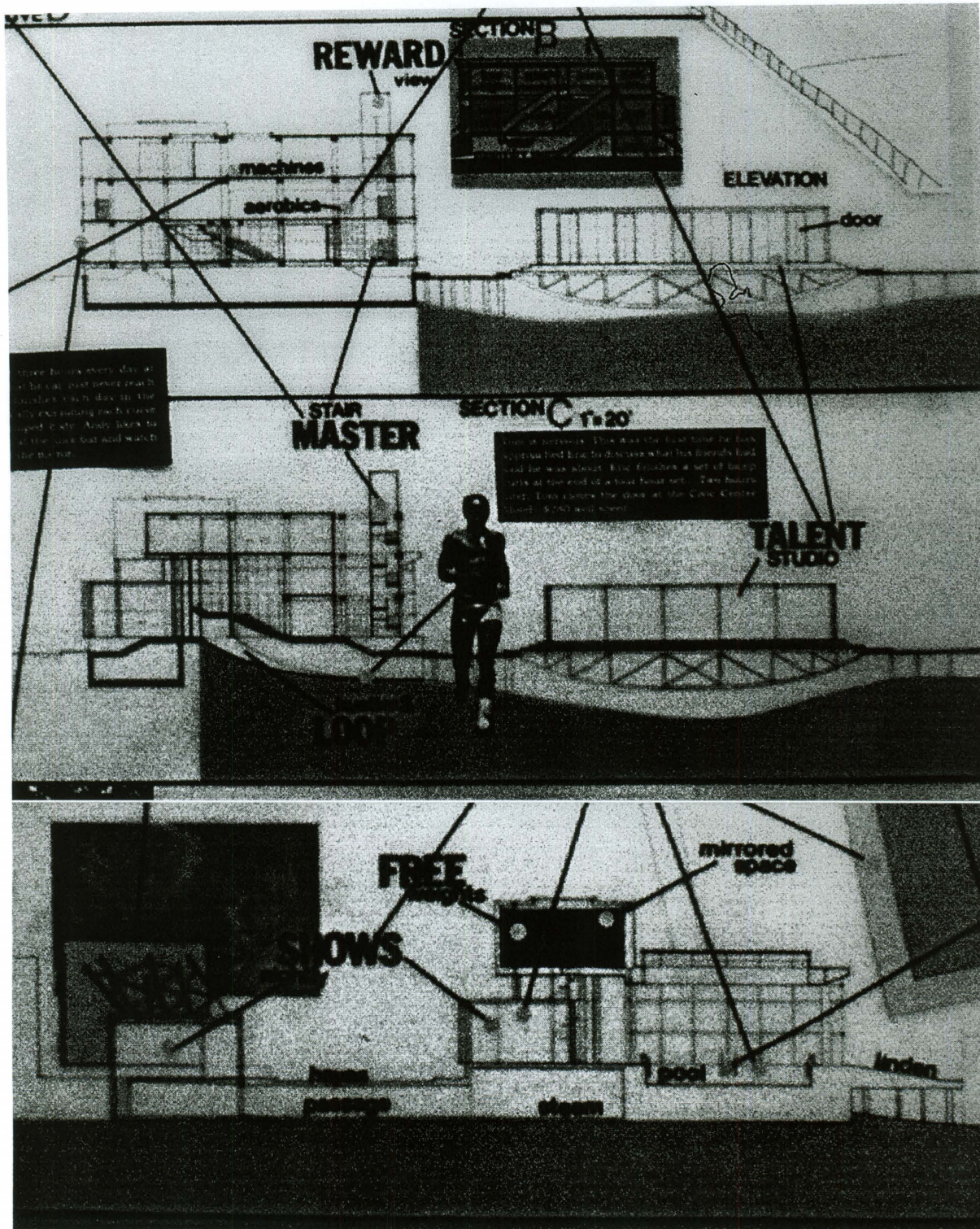




*sketch for talent studio bridge/runway*

Chad saw an ad in the Guardian on Thursday so he decided to go into the Metamorphosis Gym and see what they had to offer. He had heard that the steam rooms were fun.









*Private garages along Linden Street means no street parking along the curb.*

mean travel time to work: 26.9 minutes.

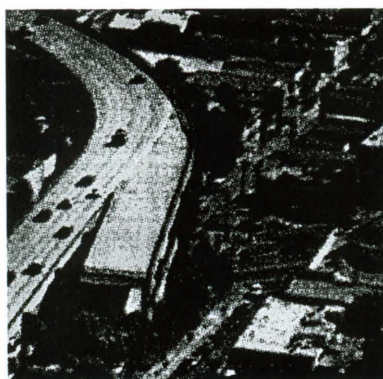


## Proposition 2: PARKING

The second proposition is the construction of a parking structure at the termination of the central freeway at Mission Street in the South-of-Market(SOMA) area. Traffic will drive into the garage from the highway and walk out of the garage using the running track.

San Francisco population:	1990: 723,959	1960: 740,316	1930: 634,394	1900: 342,782	1870: 149,473
	1980: 678,974	1950: 775,357	1920: 506,676	1890: 298,997	1860: 56,802
	1970: 715,674	1940: 634,536	1910: 416,912	1880: 233,959	source: Bureau of the Census





*Traffic flows into the city via the bridges and freeways.*

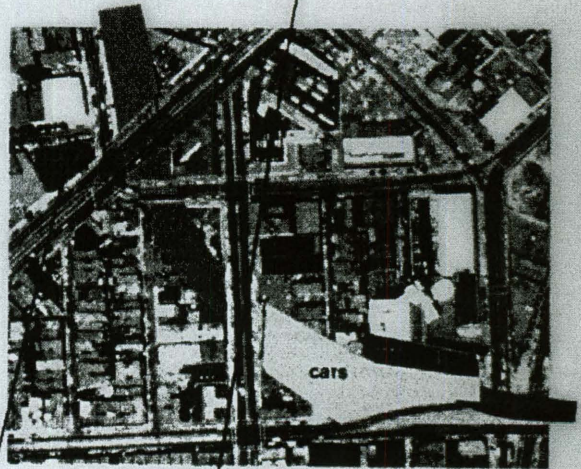




FOREST  
no scale



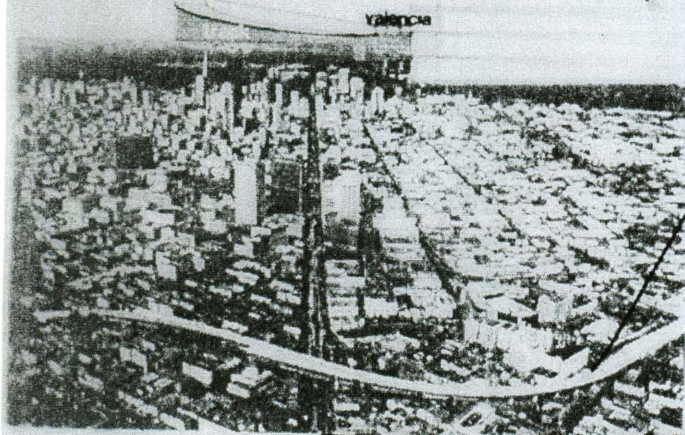
At Bear White Park - Colin meets a noble savage  
and buys two bits of ecstasy from him for \$50.  
He takes the bits later with a friend. They wait  
in the car. Nothing happens.



I decide to go out of the village at 11.30. I  
usually go to the Church and walk back,  
but today I need a change in the routine. I  
want to go to the village and see the  
church. I want to see the church and  
the area with the church. I want to see  
the church and the area with the church.  
I want to see the church and the area  
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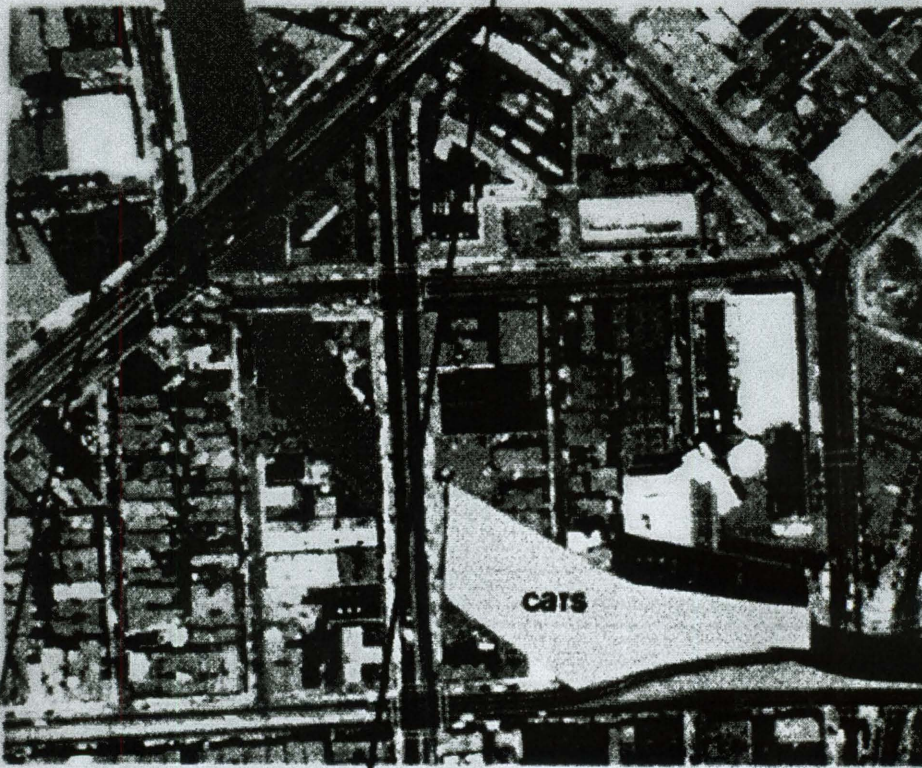
TANNING  
deck

HIGH  
central sky  
way

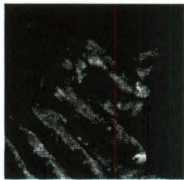


# PARKING



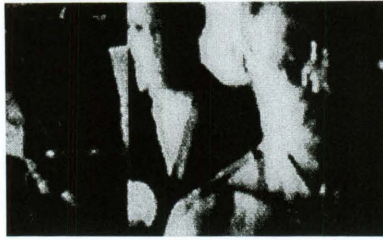


I decide to get out of the subway at Octavia — usually I go to the Church stop and walk back, but today I need a change in my routine. As I emerge from underground I hear screaming and chanting, camera crews from the networks fixed the area with their spotlights. It seems to be a demonstration or gathering in front of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center in support of legalizing same-sex marriage.

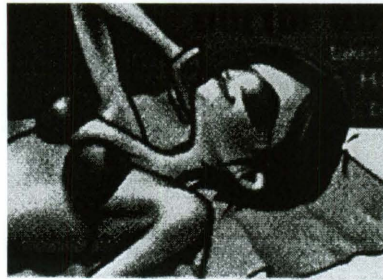


Identity: language-5 + yrs. speak English at home: 396,596 speak Non-English at home: 292,093; median income: \$33,414; 100% urbanized; 25-29 yrs. 11.4% of population, highest %; median age: 36.0 yrs.; white: 388,341; black: 78,931; american indian: 3354; asian: 211,000; other: 42,333; hispanic: 96,640. *source: U.S. census, 1990*

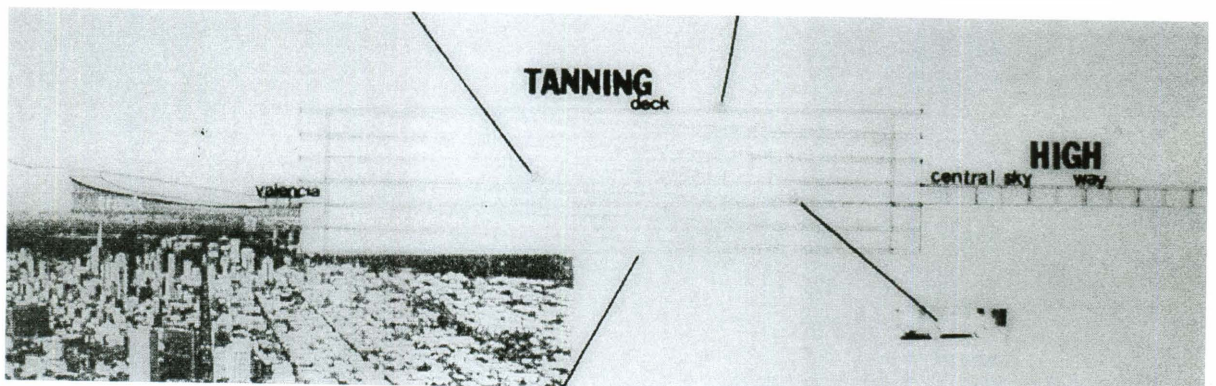




Glances are exchanged as people move in and around the garage floors.

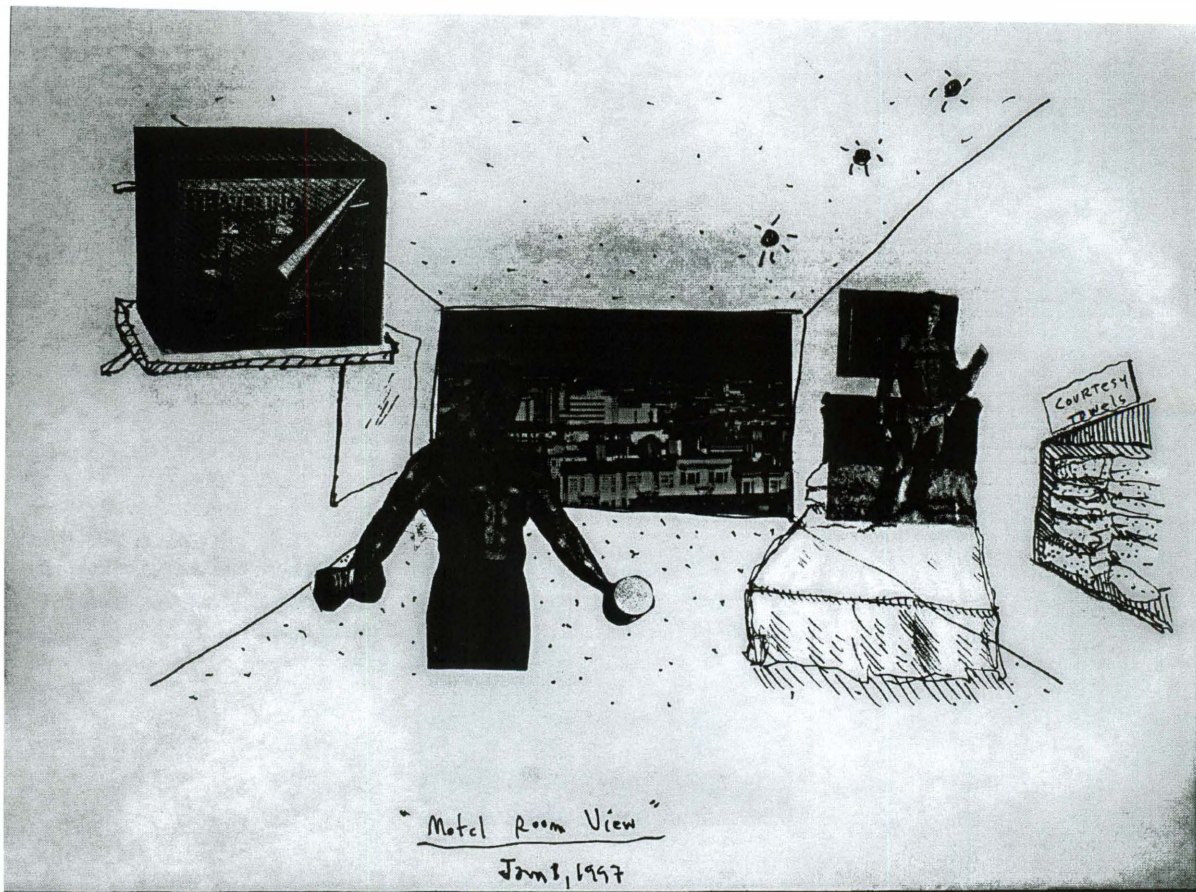


A sunbather takes advantage of the roof deck of the parking garage, catching some sun and making a few calls



*the parking structure covers a large portion of a SOMA block*



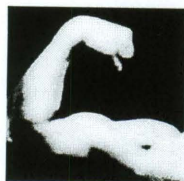


the busy guests



### **Proposition 3: ROOMS**

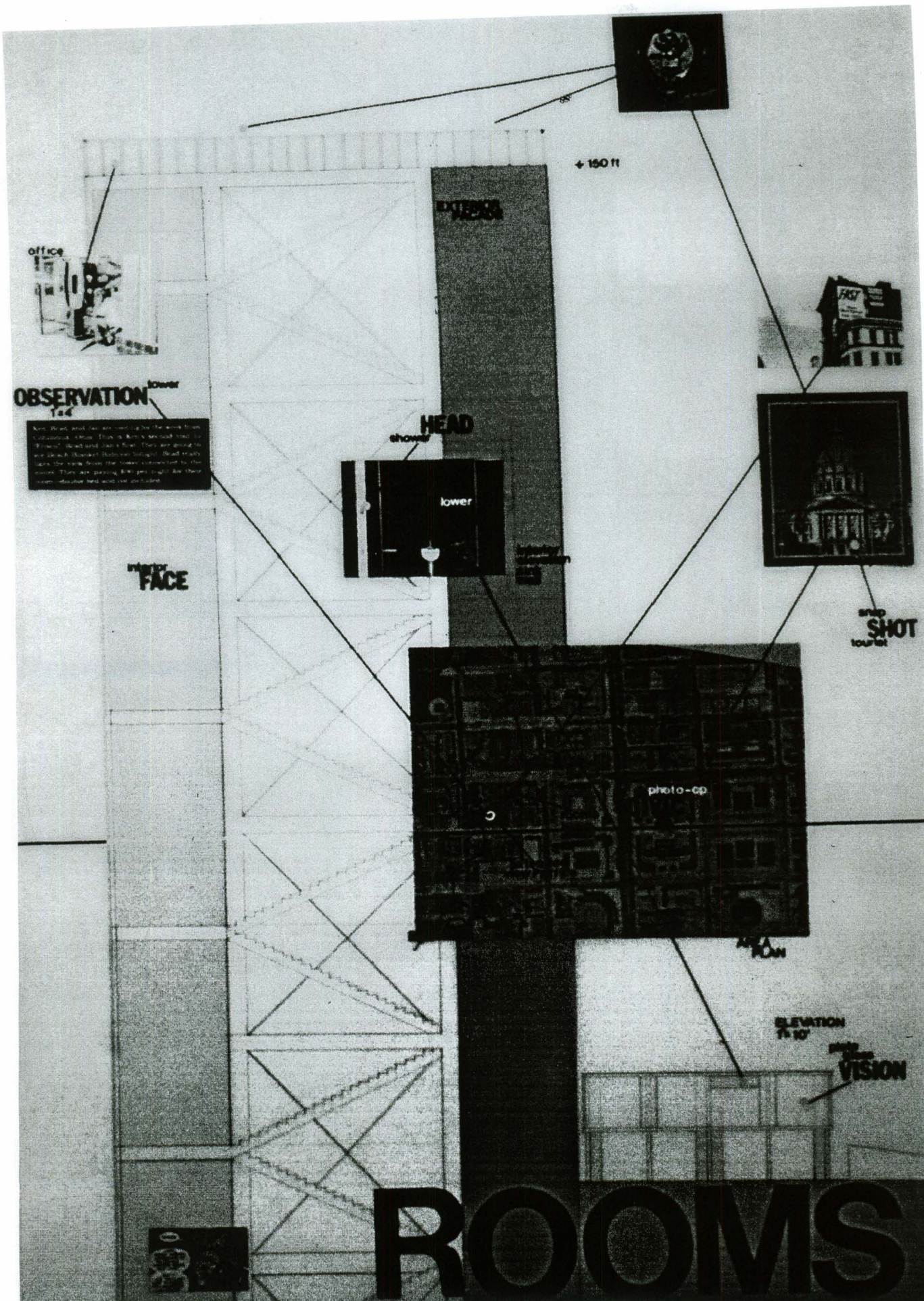
This project is located in the civic center. It provides tourist activities and motel accomodations.



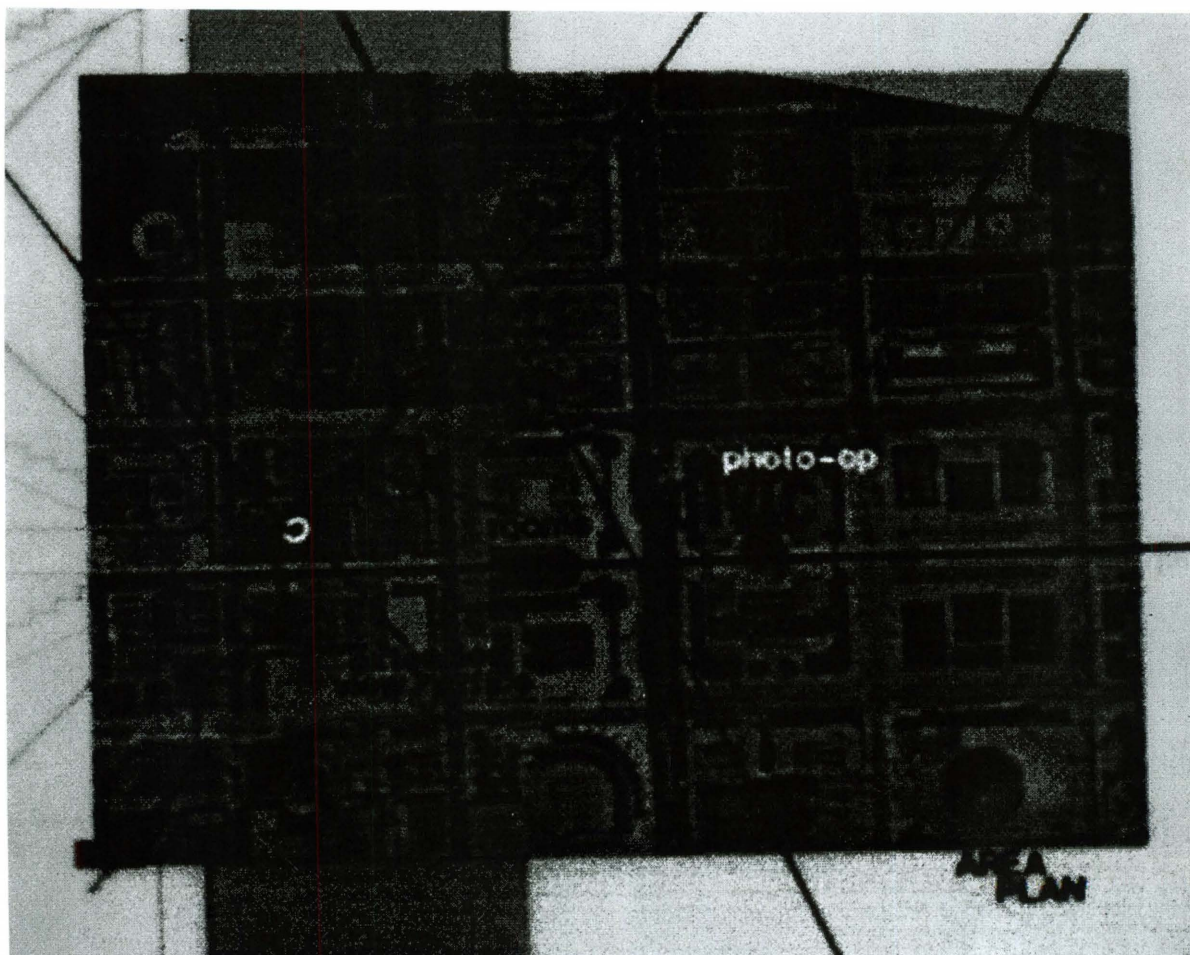






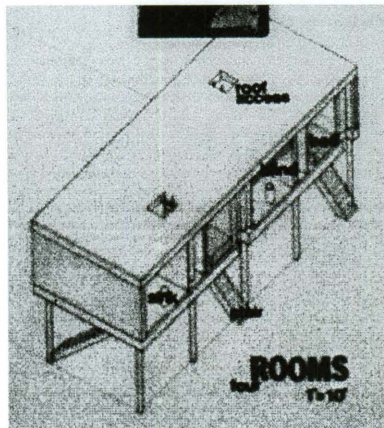






*the motel rooms and the observation tower are placed on the track*

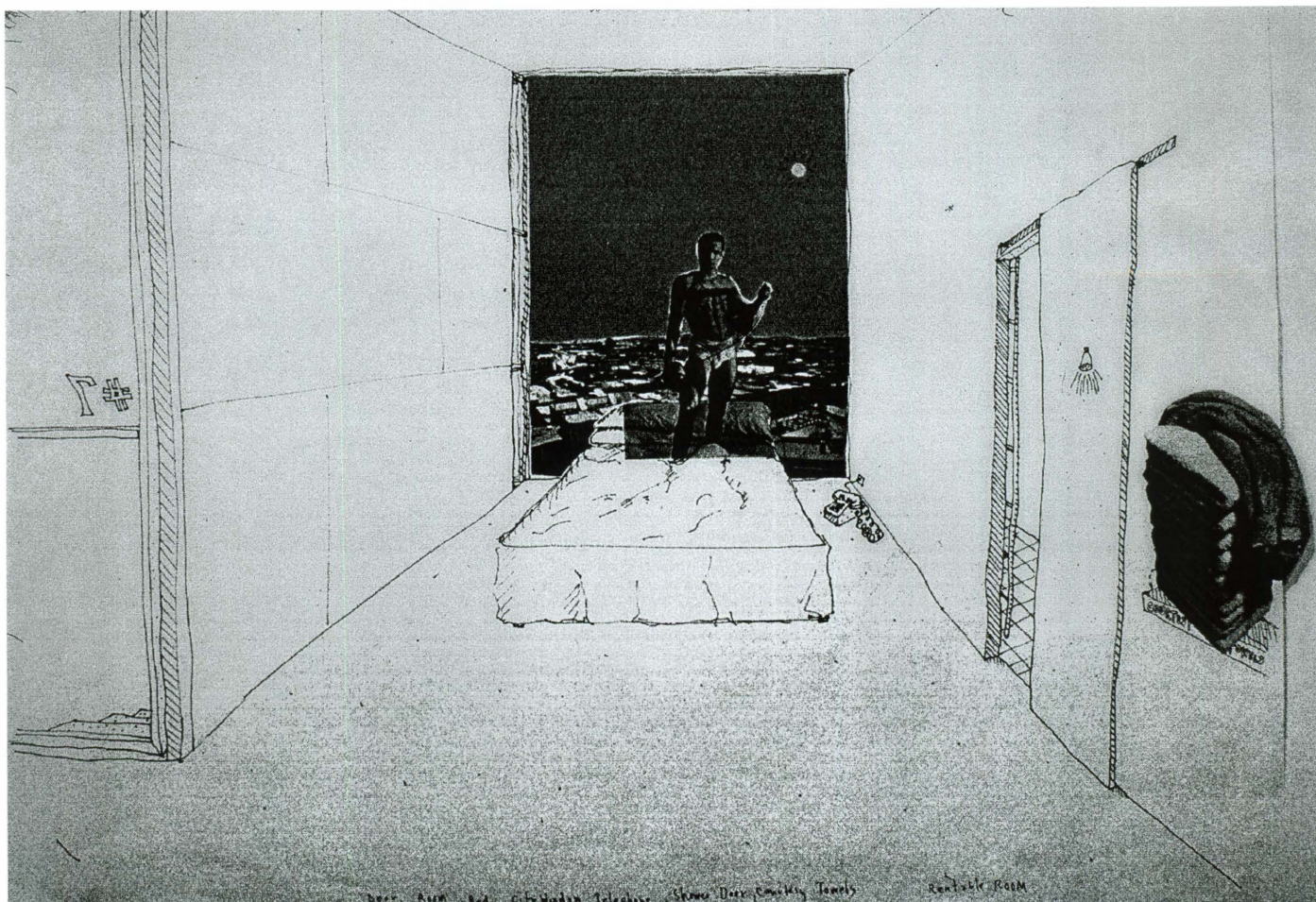




The blocks of rooms are scattered over the track as it passes through the axially organized civic center area which houses city hall, state buildings, federal buildings, the city library, a large public plaza

At 9:30pm on Friday night, two SF Art Institute students held a performance along Grove Street.

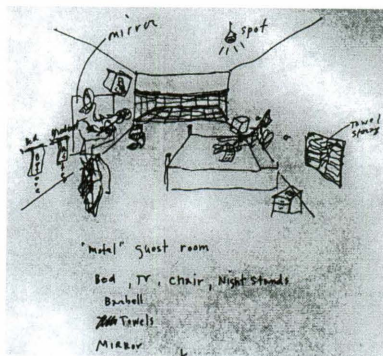




waiting after a run through the hustler loop and a quick drive to the room

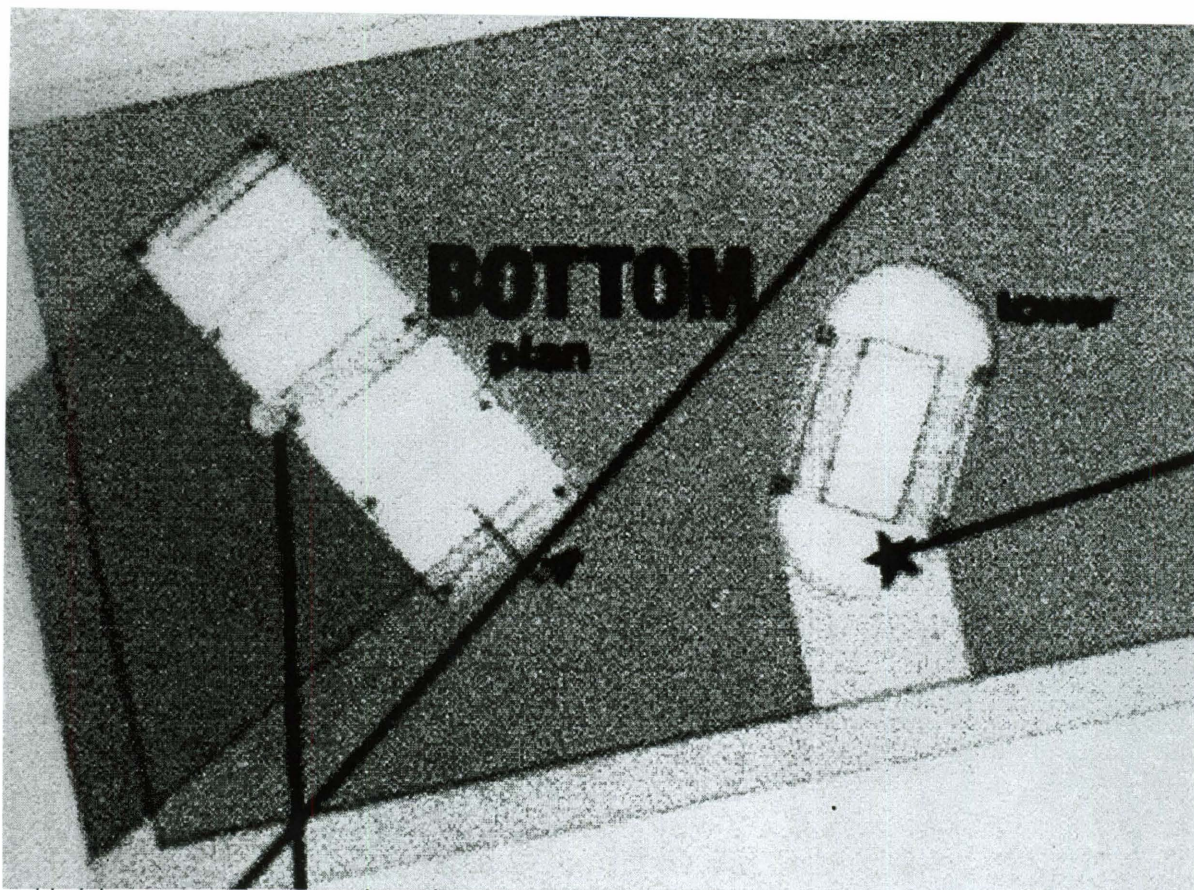






sketch

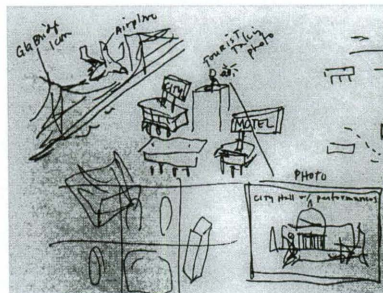




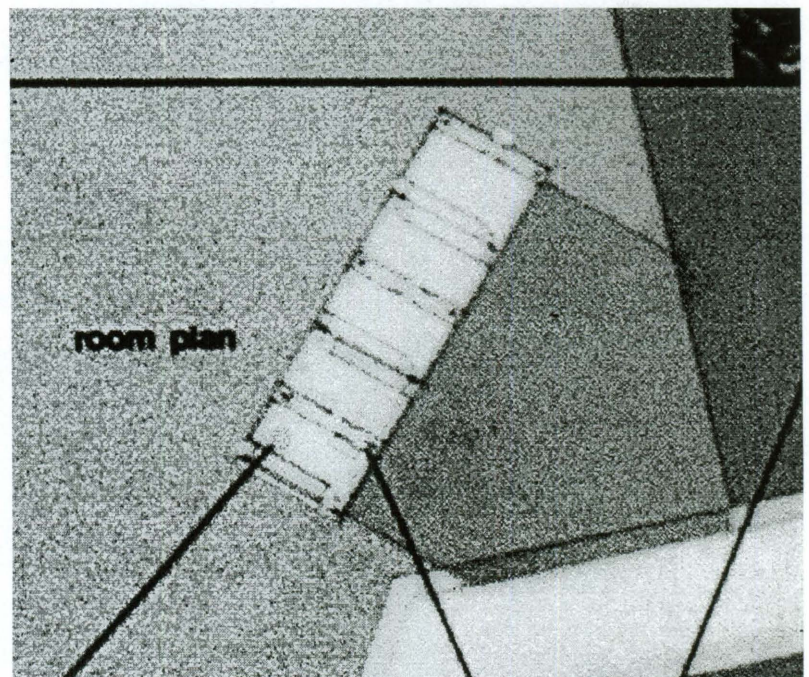
*track level plan: car spaces, stairs to rooms, columns, observation tower entrance, motel office*



Ken, Brad and Jan are visiting for the week from Columbus, Ohio. This is Ken's second visit to "Frisco"; Brad and Jan's first. They are going to see "Beach Blanket Babylon" tonight. Brad really likes the view from the tower connected to the motel.



The observation tower allows the visitor to get a hilltop view while being in the flat area of the civic center



room plan: bed, phone, sink, towels, blinds, shower room(shared with neighboring room), ladder to roof in shower





## Future Propositions

### future cities

The strategy set forth in these propositions is intended as a way of approaching city building as an activity which creates connections (both literal and metaphorical) between the existing and the new. It refuses the erasure of large pieces of the older city (modernist planning) as well as large scale master plans of city life. Instead it wishes to augment or heighten the activities of the city on a scale directly associated with human activity. This is not a nostalgic method, it is simply a way of building in a city that operates currently and will continue to generate a life of its own separate from design.

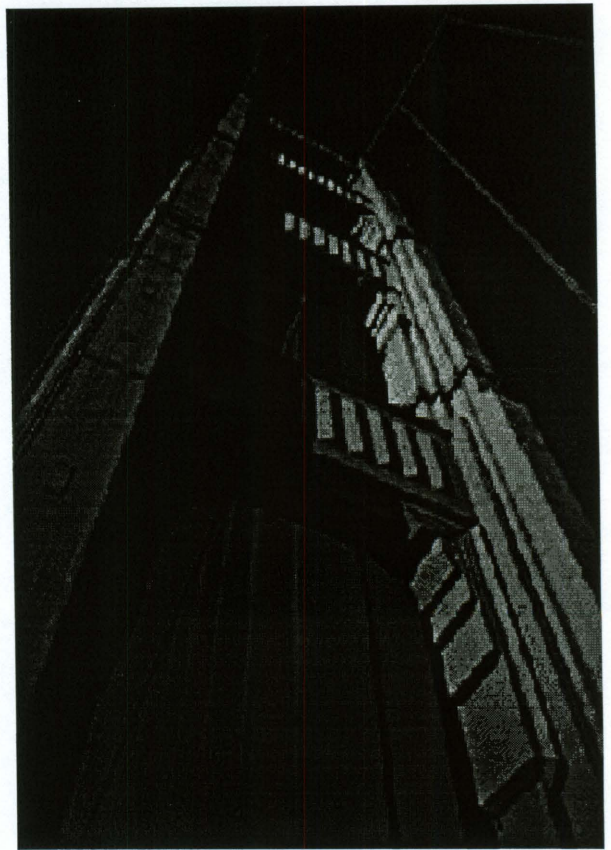


*the 50th anniversary of the Golden Gate Bridge*



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